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# Pleasantly chaotic

SUPHIE VIZINEZY: *The Rules of Chaos*. 223pp. Macmillan. 30s.

Mr. Vizinezy's new book of rules splits up into several sections. There is a good deal of unsystematic thinking about chaos which gives just a tinge of Charles Fort and expresses itself in punchy little paragraphs rather like Valéry's *Regards sur le monde actuel*. There is an engaging but finally questioning appreciation of Eugene McCarthy. There is a demolition of Styrone's *Confessions of Nat Turner* as airily spectacular as a stick of gelignite tossed into a chicken-house. There is a piece in praise of Stendhal, Stendhal the unfoolable, whom Mr. Vizinezy is justifiably eager to recommend as a study for an age fooled to the top of its bent. The book finishes with more thought and some scraps of diary. Interspersed through all this, thin bits among the thick bits, are moments of autobiography and minutes of the author's life now. And running through the whole assembly, pinning it together like the skewer through the shish-kebab, is the problem of Vietnam.

The author is an interesting man who has been through the mill. The book is less interesting and gives the impression of having been through the press in something of a hurry. If Mr. Vizinezy did not have such a seductive literary personality—he sounds sometimes like Saroyan in his *Kach-Duck* mood—this book would probably not have received the attention it has. One would like to wave it forward on its narrow-gauge branch-line with an indulgent smile. But thoughts are thoughts and have to be contended with.

Here comes one thought now:

What goes for individuals goes also for groups; the larger the community, the less coherent and organized it can possibly be. This is why the huge empire of Russia and America have been disintegrating ever since the war.

Yes indeed, but just how large is "larger"? If the desirable alternative is smallness, does not the problem of contentious multiplicity arise? Elsewhere in the book we find the author praising the Italians for their natural characteristics and instinct for civilization. Machiavelli,

one faintly recalls, drew a different picture at a time when the local authorities were running their own show. Problems cease to be problems when they are merely prodded instead of being brought up; here as in too many other places Mr. Vizinezy is projecting an air of content by suggesting, with his sweetly reasonable tone, that it is all a matter of how men think. "A world government," he says later on, "far from bringing about universal peace and stability, would mean total anarchy. Bigness is weakness." But does not smallness mean stability only when other, bigger powers are enforcing a balance? There is a tacit assumption that we have natural borders to fall back to, once our conquering ambitions are seen to be folly. But really there is only one natural border, a line drawn across the front of a cave, and it could be argued that it took those mad ambitions to get us out. Simplicity can talk complexity away—but only for the length of a charming book.

Here comes another thought. "A man is free when he understands that every act is like the act of love." On the contrary, a man is a dumb-cluck.

The epigram or bromide, however, is preceded by the preparatory comment that we are free to live in an irrational world. Vizinezy nowhere gives a tidy account of the world's affairs, confining himself to the possibly revealing prophecies of St. Life. Dr. Benewick's writer key and that the schemes of mice and men are fragile.

The book is not all a well-defined account of the right of the angels. He would like to stop, he would like the law to stop being criminally active, he would like the Russians to be like the murderous penes of Vietnam to cease forthwith, he is saying that the adoption of a particular point of view about the nature of existence from it, the author has imposed a deadly framework. Unfortunately he cannot escape this perception even to a wisher, and the reason he gives is that it is not a mere pleasant noise.

## The far right in the 1930s

BENEFICK: *Political Order and Public Order*. 340pp. Lane The Penguin Press.

From the press so soon after publication of Sir Oswald Mosley's *Life*, Dr. Benewick's book is a well-timed, but there is a great deal of research and soberly researched and soberly researched account of the right of the angels.

A greater part of it consists of a history of the British Fascist movement from its emergence in the "New Party" in 1932 to its final collapse in 1940. The narrative is well documented, and the author has a valuable service to the study of history by providing a clear and judicious record. For who was politically active in the 1930s, which attempts to the failure of fascism to strike root in British political life, though what he says here is not very clearly stated and adds little to what we know.

Benewick, whose political centre does not conceal an

intense dislike of the fascists, but he makes a most conscientious effort to be objective about both their activities and those of their opponents. He also puts the record straight about the behaviour of the police, who appear as a much-harassed but only occasionally brutal body of men placed in the difficult position of having to defend the indefensible in the name of free speech. Although more susceptible to fascist than to anti-fascist propaganda, they were by no means the raving reactionaries that the communists made them out to be. The magistrates, who had to deal with the violence committed by both fascists and anti-fascists, do not come off quite as well. The militants themselves, with their "they shall not pass" tactics, are made to appear, with some justification, as people who, for good reasons or bad, succeeded mainly in giving advertisement to a movement which, in the British political environment, would most likely have perished by neglect as soon as the leader's growing megalomania had sufficiently tarnished his political reputation. Ironically enough, one of the main causes of the fascist decline in the late 1930s was the "pro-fascist" National Government's Public Order Act of 1936—a measure which, by banning political uniforms, dealt a blow to Mosley's paramilitary organization from which it never recovered, but which also imposed severe restrictions on freedom of assembly, unwelcome to militants and liberals alike.

Although Dr. Benewick's standard of accuracy is very high, there is a curious error where one of the anti-fascists, arrested and hanged after Mosley's extremely violent Oxford meeting is described as "Bernard F. G. Floyd", the son of "St. Francis Floyd", the High Commissioner for Canada. The alleged bearer of this name was Bernard Flood, subsequently a Labour member of Parliament. The error is rather more than trivial because David Floyd, now *The Daily Telegraph* special correspondent on communist affairs, was also a prominent figure in the Oxford anti-fascist movement at that time. A few pages later, the famous socialist priest, Father Crosser, appears, disguised as "Grosser".

The very full bibliography contains two surprising omissions. There is no mention of Major Barnes's book on fascism which, as a companion-piece to Harold Laski's *Communism in the "Home University Library"*, was in the late 1920s and early 1930s, the main source of information available to those curious about the strange new doctrine. One would also have expected a bibliographical reference to H. R. G. Greaves's *Reactionary England*, which was far more influential than many of the other books and pamphlets listed under "Anti-Fascist Publications". Nevertheless, one must be grateful to Dr. Benewick for having provided the best bibliography of this subject yet to appear.

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# Fascism in the blood

CARLO EMILIO GADDA: *Eros e Priapo*. 212pp. Milan: Garzanti. L.2,000.

Since originality suggests singularity, uniqueness, separateness, it is hardly surprising that the great original of present-day Italian writing, Carlo Emilio Gadda, cannot, like most other writers, be pigeonholed as this or that. Novelist or essayist, philosopher or philologist; he is all of them but none in particular, and his books belong in no exact literary compartment. He is the most influential of them. *Quer pasticciaccio brutto de via Merulana*, published in 1957 after Gadda had worked on it for nearly twenty years, is on the face of it a detective story (though on the underside very much more). And it was that, neatly placed under the apparently monolithic structure of the Italian language, which blew it so effectively sky-high that lesser writers have ever since been picking up the bits and working over them with fascination and wonder.

On the writing of prose in particular Gadda has had this exhilarating and liberating effect: it is not far-fetched to talk of pre and post-Gadda Italian. But more generally, on the whole concept of Italian as a living language, his influence has perhaps been greater and may spread further. Others had experimented before him, had stood the rigid constructions on their head and tried to break free of the toppling abstractions that bedevil the writing of nearly all educated Italians, of private as well as public expression. But it took a major writer to make people see that freedom from the convention that speech was one thing, writing another, in Italian of all languages.

meant an incomparable linguistic richness: the whole field of dialect, that widespread subculture without a parallel in English, was opened up, and all the Italian eloquence in everyday speech—by implication, almost gesture and shrug and raised eyebrow—at once became available.

It was Gadda with his mixed, non-literary background that was a civil engineer of some eminence during what is generally called the prime of life who pointed out something as simple: the fact that this richness lay about for the taking, as well as being buried in the past, in other languages and other literatures. Whatever came to hand he took and used, inventing, polishing, refining: dialect and slang, conversational talk at its chattiest and most condensed, at its most full of gestures and implied grimaces, as well as the archaic and the petrified which he dug for and used in a new, hurried way. Under each word of his there are others, under each phrase, symbols and suggestions of other phrases; layers, upon layers give it an extraordinary density and darkness, and a sense of elaboration under a surface often plain to the point of colloquialism, abruptness. Gadda has been described for English readers as being "like an Italian Ivy Compton-Burnett", and although inadequate as a description this does suggest the odd juxtaposition of styles, moods and even personalities in his writing, the paradox of an old man setting the pace for the impatient young.

Among the subjects that have fascinated Gadda is fascism, its two decades in Italy and their effect upon Italians; again and again he has returned to that time, that atmosphere, capturing its strange hysteria

half humorously, half with contempt. In *Eros e Priapo* he plunges into the age again, but without (as in *Quer pasticciaccio*) the excuse of fiction; the publisher, describe this remarkable essay as an anti-novel, but by ordinary standards it would hardly seem to qualify either as a novel or as its opposite, indeed as anything classifiable. It is variations upon a theme Gadda seems to find infinitely rich and rewarding: recapitulations and discussions, not so much of fascism itself as of its effect upon people—mass effects, yet felt in secret, in the most hidden parts of heart, soul and body.

It is this inner existence, these effects upon the psyche, that Gadda deals with, all the unadmitted fantasies and dreams aroused by the cult of particular forms of masculinity and femininity, by the projection of an image of potency and power and pure, almost mystical sexuality, by a mass hysteria that made women slaves of that image, men half-exasperated initiators of it; the role of exhibitionism and the narcissism in the fascist ideology, the various juvenile, even infantile expedients through which adults were kept enthralled.

The psychology of fascism has been examined, of course, by both artists and scientists, in fiction and in fact; but not in this way. Here, Gadda looks at it not as an outsider a quarter of a century removed from even the end of it, nearly half a century from the beginning, remembering coolly what went on and how it felt; but as a man involved, reliving what happened at the lowest levels of its being, feeling its effects viscerally rather than cerebrally, reacting to it with a violence and tenderness—a kind of compassionate fury—that, at this distance in time, is strange as well as startlingly effective.

ive. *Eros e Priapo* is a brilliant, impressionistic and often funny account of attitudes, of fun, of tensions and absurdities, all kinds of Italianness, fascist specifically so, seldom unadmitted alone discussed; written in this extreme form of Gadda's elaborate, inventive language, which seems to spin itself, rather than be spun Gadda, so totally are style and fact one, so completely does Gadda persuade one of the exactness, inevitability even, of his extremely method.

Benewick, whose political centre does not conceal an

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# The far left in the 1870s

BAKUNINE: *Etatisme et Anarchie*. 1873. Edited by Arthur White. Translated by Marcel Lefebvre. Archives Bakounine III. Liden: E. J. Brill.

Basic edition of the Bakunin edited by Dr. Lehning for the Amsterdam Institute of Social Studies, has reached the last and important of Bakunin's theoretical writings, the treatise on *State and Anarchy*, originally published in Russian in Zurich in 1873. The volume contains the complete work, with its appendix, written apparently as an afterthought, on the prospects of revolution in Russia, and a programme of action for his organization in Russia, written a few months before his death. A French translation of the whole, and a modicum of commentary, make this a bulky volume. Dr. Lehning has devoted the preparation and annotation of the text to the attentive care of the editor.

It is this most systematic of all least systematic of all essays and writers may mislead, it seems the epithet only by courtesy or by Bakunin's own remarkable standards. It reflects all his preoccupations—the future of European revolutionary movements, the fate of the International of the peculiar organization he had created within it, the rift between the kind of socialism he wished to make use of the

and the rise to power of Bismarck and of the German Empire—the result of the victory over the result of these themes he had dealt with piecemeal; some many years. In these pages there is a rare glimpse of Bakunin's mind in a raging torrent of indignation. It is a formidable and impressive performance, though it is difficult to imagine any political doctrine than anarchism could be propagated in this way.

Many shrewd observations are made in the process. The Slavs are seen against national revolution; an all-embracing social revolution is seen to overthrow the power of any civilization. Russia is the finished. His ambition to "rescue" Marxism from its errors "yet still retain those truths about the human condition that cannot as yet be found elsewhere" would seem to lead to a rejection of the grandiose doctrine

The Prussian Kingdom was in league with the Russian Empire to oppress Poles and Lithuanians; no Russian Tsar would dare to go to war with Germany. But in France, too, "everything within is rotten", and "in the whole of this still huge body there does not remain one spark of a living soul".

A curious excursion into the Far East (perhaps the product of Bakunin's Siberian sojourn) shows China, with a population exceeding 400 millions, sending waves of emigrants to Australia and California. What will happen when these turn to the north and north-west? "Siberia will cease to be Russian." But, by way of conclusion, he returns to his predominant obsession of this period—the substantial identity of the part-Germanism of Bismarck and that of Marx, both based on the determination to "maintain and strengthen the state at all costs". On the other side, the social revolution, dedicated to "the destruction of all states and the annihilation of bourgeois civilization" was raising its standard throughout the rest of Europe. In a second statement, it was proposed to show how these two opposite principles had

# Synthesis in the 1960s

ALAN DAIR MACINTYRE: *Marxism and Christianity*. 143pp. Duckworth. 25s.

This little book is a revised version of an earlier one, published in 1953, when Professor MacIntyre, a very young man, "aspired to be both a Christian and a Marxist". Today, although sceptical of both Christianity and Marxism, he still believes "that one cannot entirely discard either without discarding truths not otherwise available". His main theme is that

Hegel, Feuerbach and Marx humanized certain Christian beliefs in such a way as to present a secularized version of the Christian judgment upon, rather than the Christian adaptation to, the secular present.

This he develops with his familiar learning and stylishness. It is a little difficult, however, to be quite certain how much is left of either Christianity or Marxism by the time he has finished. His ambition to "rescue" Marxism from its errors "yet still retain those truths about the human condition that cannot as yet be found elsewhere" would seem to lead to a rejection of the grandiose doctrine

"developed in the consciousness of the proletariat of Europe". This second part, true to Bakunin's lifelong habit, was never written.

Bakunin was not in any accepted sense of the word a philosopher. He sweeps aside metaphysics and positivism—the cult of abstract reason and the cult of science. He adopts many of the postures of the intellectual. What did the intellectuals who went "to the people" in Russia have to teach the simple peasant? His wisdom and understanding were deeper than theirs. The really significant events in Russian history were the peasant revolts of Stenka Razin and Pugachev. Bakunin is the most enthusiastic, most unequalled, most moving of all exponents of anarchism. For the best part of a century these doctrines have been buried and almost forgotten. But surprising things happen. In an age when the foundations of western civilization are beginning to seem as shaky as those of nineteenth-century Russia, when total revolt is being preached, and when idealization of primitive peasant revolution is once more in fashion, Bakunin would seem to be due for a revival of interest.

to very small dimensions. As for Christianity, one is left wondering how much coherence and distinctiveness it still possesses when the demythologizing process has been completed.

This is a tantalizing essay—full of the insights one has learnt to expect of a distinguished philosopher-turned-sociologist, yet too short for the adequate development of any of its many arguments. It was probably a mistake for Professor MacIntyre to attempt a revision of the most brilliant of his juvenilia. One's interest would be more deeply engaged if he had traced the course of the intellectual journey that has led him to the position he adopted at the age of twenty-three to that which he adopts today, when he finds himself "able to assert less because he knows more."

Tchou of Paris has continued their series "Les murs ont la parole" with *Vietnam pour les exilés*; *Citations de Lénine* (222pp. 7.50fr.). It is doubtful whether Lenin's method of argument really lends itself to the extraction of very brief quotations, but it is interesting to have hundreds of his thoughts on all subjects available in such a convenient form.











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## Hart Report

The "Hart Report on 'Relations with Junior Members'" in the University of Oxford is a splendidly Oxonian document. It is written in elegant, measured language; arranged with scrupulous attention to the logical division and sequence of its subject-matter; and pervaded with the urbane reasonableness, slightly tinged with acerbity, that tends to be regarded as the characteristic style of an Oxford Senior Common Room. These stylistic features of the report will hardly commend it to the student radicals whose activities (at least according to our reviewer on the opposite page) were the real cause of its production, and whose beliefs it summarizes with remarkable precision and objectivity in Appendix A. Not to them, however, is the report addressed—although they, no doubt, will be among its most avid readers. The committee is speaking to an audience of persons who are fundamentally in agreement that Oxford is a good place that is worth preserving and improving. It aims to convince them that certain reforms are now needed, both in the university's methods of preserving order and discipline among its Junior Members (i.e. students) and in its techniques of taking decisions about academic matters. Primarily, therefore, it is addressing "good" Oxonians, past and present; but one may be certain that, in the present situation of our universities, its recommendations will evoke a much wider interest.

It is on discipline that the committee's recommendations are most radical. In place of the present very widely-drawn statutory provision, it proposes one that forbids "conduct likely to disrupt teaching or study or research or the administration of the university" and the damage, defacement or improper use of university or college property. All other rules are to be made by a rules committee consisting of an equal number of Senior and Junior members. Equally important, the adjudication of alleged breaches of these rules is to be confined to a disciplinary court, sitting, under a legally qualified chairman, both as a tribunal of first instance and as one of appeal, and permitting the accused to appear through a representative (who can be, if so desired, a lawyer engaged in professional practice). The proctors, who at present constitute a living denial of the principle of the separation of powers, are to have their wings severely clipped in the interests of "natural justice".

On "Participation of Junior Members in Academic Business" the main recommendation is that there should be "regular channels of communication

between Senior and Junior Members" to supplement the informal ones that already exist. These are to take the form of joint consultative committees, the Junior Members of which would have an independent right of access to the decision-making bodies. Such joint committees are to be attached not only to the various faculties but to the central organs concerned with the making of academic policy: the General Board and the Hebdomadal Council. In nominating the Junior Members of the joint committees, the Student Representative Council, which has hitherto enjoyed no more than quasi-official recognition, is to play a leading role, on condition that it agrees to revise certain items in its present constitution.

If these recommendations, which are, of course, far more complicated than the brief summary above suggests, are put into effect, it would be difficult for any student to claim either that he had been denied justice or that he had been deprived of opportunity to participate in the making of academic policy. Only the student who continued to insist that the "one-man-one-vote" principle was applicable with equal validity to university government—as to national government—would feel seriously aggrieved. How aggrieved the majority of students feel even under the present dispensation is very much open to doubt; but, even if a sense of "alienation" is general, it is difficult to see how much farther the committee could have gone in the direction of

the alert, extracting the utmost from them, forcing them along. He expects them, night and day, to a relentless light in which nothing is hid. No human being, other than a fiend, would treat with his fellow-humans in daily life, in so ruthless, uncompromising a manner.

There is no sign that the boom in Latin-American studies is abating. A Center of Inter-American Relations has now been luxuriously installed in Park Avenue, New York; its purpose is to instruct the American public in the politics, economics and culture of its underprivileged neighbors. In order to dispel "a general lack of information... on Latin-American literature" in the United States, the Center has helped to finance and promote the publication of no fewer than twenty Latin-American novels and five books of poems over the past year, not to mention special issues on Latin-American theatre and fiction respectively in *The Drama Review* and *TriQuarterly*. The Center's list of donors reveals an impressive array of big business names with large interests in Latin America, and one wonders what hectic inspiration prompts the United Fruit Company, General Electric and General Motors to help finance the novels of Mario Vargas Llosa and the poems of Octavio Paz.

In this country Latin-American centres have been flourishing for two or three years in several universities and the first issue of a *Journal of Latin American Studies*, sponsored by the centres at Cambridge, Glasgow, Liverpool, London and Oxford, has now appeared, with articles by John Lynch, E. J. Hobsbawm and John Calvert. Meanwhile the Bank of London and South America has established a trust fund to finance the publication of research work on Latin America, Bovril, Baring and Dunlop are among the fund's contributors. Application for grants from it should be sent to Dr. Harold Blackmore, Institute of Latin American Studies, 31 Tavistock Road, London, W.C.1.

Elizabeth Bowen's lecture last Thursday to the Royal Society of Literature was entitled "A Novelist and His Characters". A forthcoming venture, by the sound of it, carrying the promise of unveiled mysteries, surrendered technicalities, and so on; or perhaps some new Murdochian doctrine of non-interference. As it neither informative nor theorizing mood; her attitude was healthily puzzled and submissive. "Where do characters come from?" she inquired, then promptly cooled our curiosity: "All the author can tell you is that there is no formula." Characters cannot be photographed from life, nor can they be frigidly invented (though in unsatisfactory works this is very often what takes place). The best novelist can do is to describe their arrival: they simply emerge "like a ship coming forward out of a fog at sea" and the novelist is well to welcome them. A fog? Well, at any rate, "a mist in which forgotten and re-absorbed dreams, a mist of hitherto unimagined" The most interesting, if somewhat underdeveloped, section of Miss Bowen's talk came towards the end when she discussed the relationship between the creator and created; each threatens to possess the other, and the success of the fiction depends upon both contestants achieving the right balance of success, and failure—neither can hand.

The characters with whom I have to contend are story inhabitants of my being; they are not mine. If anything, I am at risk of becoming theirs, for they take over my faculties for their purposes. I think that for many novelists—and I am one—there is something demonic about characters. On the other hand, the novelist's subjects (his characters) are inhuman pressure—keeping them at

The Leeds University English department is offering a *New Poets Award* of £100 to "poets resident in Britain who have not published more than one volume of poetry." The first award will be made in 1970 and the lucky poet—in addition to receiving his cash prize—will also have his work printed and published by the English School. The judges will be Christopher Rick and Peter Porter, assisted by an editorial board drawn from the *Yorkshire Post* and the English School.

"participation" without the ultimate authority of Junior Members to decide academic policy, authority which, in any case, they are pains to preserve.

It could, of course, have given students representation in academic decision-making themselves, as has already been done in certain other universities, to insert the thin end of this particular wedge. In any case, it had some regard to the strongly expressed opinions of Senior Members, as to those of Junior. Indeed, some of the evidence it appears to have received, its proposals for Junior Members even a considerable position from the "reactionary" Senior Common Room. Just how charmingly reasonable some of these can be is well known to any Oxonian or ex-Oxonian.

What will eventually be done, these recommendations are, in guess, Oxford is predictable in its dilatoriness. One may expect that it will take a long time to reach a decision. For months, perhaps even for years—the "Hart Report" will be a major talking-point—a subject that has recently been a fair bulk of literature and discussion. Perhaps the students will try to force the pace, perhaps, with the doubtful assistance of their radical colleagues, they will succeed in doing so. It can safely be said that all the "Hart Report" has done is to give now have a very coherent, and elegant document to argue to

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## Mothers Alone Poverty and the Fatherless Family Dennis Marsden

An examination of the living standards and social situations of a number of unmarried, separated, divorced, widowed mothers and their children. The author of one of the best-selling books on the subject, *Mothers Alone*, would certainly categorize this as "left-wing". The O. O. Rhodes, Rector of Somers, Oxfordshire, has brought to the attention of the "Establishment" the nature of the various fields of activity. It is much as one would expect, and well-planned. Although there are one or two rather perfunctory chapters, conventional in matter and evading the issues, the challenge to authority is an introductory essay on "Psychology of Authority" by the best thing in the book. The four books in this collection are much more worthwhile. The immediately entertaining and readable is *A Degree of Delinquency* by a young woman at Reading. History at King's College, London, who was fortunate to possess the resources to go to the University of Cambridge, beginning with a young woman at Reading. History at King's College, London, who was fortunate to possess the resources to go to the University of Cambridge, beginning with a young woman at Reading.

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Rather surprisingly, the committee itself lets a fairly large cat out of the bag when it says "that the main body of Junior Members do not think about and are not concerned to criticize the present university structure or to demand arrangements which would involve Junior Members in the University's government even in a consultative capacity". It is this factually true, who can seriously doubt that threats of disruption by a small minority of radicals are the real *foetus* of the proposed reforms, and indeed the main reason for the appointment of the committee itself?

This raises the further question of what reform is likely to achieve, if anything. The radicals themselves will not be satisfied, since, as the Committee points out in its Appendix A, they regard liberalization as a form of manipulation. What they want is not an improvement in relations between Senior and Junior Members, but a further deterioration in such relations, leading to a "revolutionary" situation in the university which they hope will—sooner or later—spark off a revolution in society at large. As for the non-radicals, what they want is peace and quiet to get on with their studies and to equip themselves for whatever occupation to which it pleases "bourgeois" society to call them. There remains a rather amorphous and fluctuating middle group of genuinely "reformist" students, to whom the prospect of a purely advisory capacity, makes some appeal. Many of these, however, would undoubtedly find the reality less appealing than the prospect; for as most Senior Members are never tired of reminding them, most committee work is extremely dull. In view of all this, it is pertinent to ask whether the committee's proposals, on which so much time and thought have been spent, will achieve anything apart from disciplining any actual or potential alliance between radicals and reformists. One might even ask whether this is not their real but unacknowledged object—a useful enough object, in all conscience, but hardly one, it might be thought, of sufficient importance to warrant the making of fundamental changes in the way a university is run.

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general contentment about the university's government prevails among junior members, there is a widespread feeling that existing methods of senior-junior communication are seriously deficient, that the phrase *in statu pupillari* offers an intolerable insult to responsible young men and women, and that the disciplinary methods employed by the proctors outrageously violate the accepted canons of natural justice. If so, the proposed reforms may represent an important contribution towards Oxford's rather foot-dragging adaptation to a changing social order. But one cannot be certain.

This kind of uncertainty, and the self-questioning that accompanies it, pervades the contributions to *Anarchy and Culture*, a very good symposium. Dr. David Martin, the editor, sets the ball rolling with an entertaining and suitably deadpan parable about "The Dissolution of the Monasteries", and concludes the proceedings with an expression of restrained optimism:

Anarchism and vitalism are excellent attitudes for social parasites but not serious political philosophies. It is the Fortians who make revolutions, even in England. One needs not worry too much about long-haired Cavaliers decked out in the trimmings of Carnaby Street.

This is well said, and a much-needed corrective to the alarmism propagated by many journalists and some politicians. But one wonders whether recent events in Dr. Martin's own institution, the L.S.E., may not have suggested to him that, as a final judgment, it may be irrelevant to the real issue; for although it is true enough that a miscellaneous collection of undisciplined, somewhat self-indulgent and frequently self-righteous students cannot make a revolution or even take over a university for very long, it is also true that, with a certain amount of persistence, they can destroy the institution within which they are operating, either by making the effective performance of its functions virtually impossible or by provoking damaging forms of intervention by outraged public authorities.

It is of this danger that Professor Peter Wiles is so acutely aware. The dons themselves, he believes, are the ones who must cope with it, but unfortunately the very nature of their occupation tends to disqualify them for the task. For the don, he writes, is

a specialised person, too modest to indulge in bold generalisations. He has learned disillusion and self-control, usually at the cost of emotional richness; whereas the quintessence of the New Left is the principled rejection of self-control. Again, he is not a politician, almost by definition he has renounced wider power, and mostly he is too busy and too interested in his job to care even about power in the university. Like those monks, he has shed responsibility. And herein lies selfishness, a selfishness highly characteristic of intellectuals, that the student—who accepts responsibility for the whole university—is quick to detect. There must be both reform and resistance, but both are species of *action*. It is our incapacity to act that makes me wonder if we shall pull through.

Such characteristics of those who have chosen the academic profession make the straightforward, no-nonsense remedies advocated by Mr. John Sparrow less easy to apply than one would wish. The university authorities, he believes, should first do everything they can "to maintain a channel for understanding between teachers and taught" and then, if still faced with force, "should not hesitate, after due warning, to hit back hard; calling in the police where necessary, and in appropriate cases expelling rather than rustinating serious offenders". Good strong stuff, this—but can Mr. Sparrow be absolutely certain that the "remedy" will not aggravate rather than cure the disease?

As one sees, these writers do not all have the same point of view, except in so far as they are committed to the defence of more-or-less common ideas about what universities should be like. Nor are they exclusively concerned with student unrest. The discussion of this subject is preceded by some highly informative articles about post-Robbins expansion (Richard Laved and John King), the structure of the university teaching profession (A. H. Halsey and M. Trow), and university government (Rowland Eustace). These show, among other things, how much more the universities need to get to know

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# What is neo-classical?

HUGH HONOUR: *Neo-Classicism*, 221pp. Penguin, 12s.  
MARTIN PRAZ: *On Neoclassicism*, Translated by Angus Davidson, 400pp. Thames and Hudson, £5 5s.

A generation ago "Neo-classicism" gave no trouble at all. It was a useful means of describing sculptures and buildings, and some paintings which leaned absolutely on antique types, especially those types which, like Pompeian tripods or Greek Doric columns, had only been discovered in the course of the eighteenth century. It was generally felt that such objects were frigid and, having been marked "Neo-classical", could be shelved, time being better spent on exploring the stirring, or romanticism. Now, it is altogether different. Under the stress of repeated scholarly assault, "Neo-classicism" has become ambiguous and provocative. In the second half of the eighteenth century, one must now ask, what is neo-classical and what is not? Walpole's Strawberry Hill, let us say, is not neo-classical. But Walpole's taste in other directions (his admiration for Holland's Curton House, for instance) was typically neo-classical; furthermore, the archaeological exercises out of which Strawberry Hill grew were of a kind which lies near the roots of neo-classicism. Was Beckford's Font-hill neo-classical? Obviously not. But his architect was; and Beckford himself was obsessively attracted to the greatest of all neo-classical architects, Ledoux.

By sheer press of usage, "Neo-classicism" has come to claim far more than the word can possibly, in itself, convey: it claims, in short, anything in later eighteenth-century visual art, except what any author chooses to leave out, and such omissions are likely to consist in the first place of William Blake and in the second of all objects in a style manifestly not classical but Gothic or

Chinese (or Egyptian?), but surely Egyptian furniture of the Empire is of the essence of neo-classicism. If Mr. Hugh Honour had expanded his book by just one more chapter, to take bearings on Blake, the enstilled style, and French evaluations of Gothic, it would have done the book no harm at all. But its title might have become a trifle embarrassing. Sailing dangerously near the wind, he does in fact include one Gothic castle (Seton, near Edinburgh) on the ingenious plea that here Robert Adam was dreaming of Roman military architecture of the kind seen in the background of David's "Intervention of the Sabine Women". There may be something in this; but it is a close shave.

On this matter of not stretching "Neo-classicism" to mean everything, Professor Praz is a little more open-minded. He postulates a "rational eclecticism" in which

the old antithesis between classical and romantic art loses its meaning, and both the one and the other appear to be pursuing ends that are in substance identical; Gothic taste and Greek taste seem to be merely contingent characteristics.

This, surely, is incontrovertible. The fact is that neither "Neo-classical" nor "Romantic" is appropriate for what we see in the period. Another word is wanted but, for reasons which might be found deep in the cultural history of the past hundred years, we have not got it. It seems that inherited nomenclature is forcing us to make divisions in a cultural area whose intrinsic unity we are now well equipped to understand.

The understanding of late eighteenth-century art involves a concern with things happening long before 1750. Professor Praz starts with an essay on Milton and Poussin, finding elements in both which to him are "Neo-classical". One could add, in architecture, Claude Perrault whose edition

of Vitruvius and whose share in the east front of the Louvre are more "advanced" than anything that was to come for nearly half a century. It would be a mistake (and Professor Praz does not make it) to regard such artists as having sown the seeds of a movement; they are entirely enclosed within their own age. But they are premonitory of the northern character which neo-classicism, when it came, was to have.

Mr. Honour starts with a "change of heart": a revulsion against Rococo and all that it seemed to represent, a revaluation of the monumental art of Louis XIV and the sudden prominence of artistic theory. These were vital factors, certainly, but they do not illuminate the historical inevitability of the movement. At the heart of the matter, surely, is the consideration that it is impossible to pursue the antique for generation after generation without discovering at last that it contains more issues than the one ideal issue taken for granted by sixteenth and seventeenth-century theory. The antique was found to be divisible. Style was divisible and passed into the plural. Plurality of styles means the dispersal of loyalties—or, rather, the institution of loyalties, each with an intensity of its own (as we see in Piranesi and Winckelmann). Plurality also means, inevitably, the quest for a common principle ("nature" in this case) and, as a converse effect of this, the belief in a "new style" (towards which Boullée and Ledoux were reaching in architecture).

The books before us are, of course, concerned less with the mid-century crisis itself and its origins than with the explosion of artistic performance in the subsequent half-century or more. Mr. Honour proceeds, by considering the period as a whole from a number of different standpoints. In the chapter headed "Art and Revolution" he examines David's ambivalent career in the context of events from 1784 to the Empire, then passes to the role of art in education and the nature of the neo-classical museum. In "The Ideal" he gives a crisp view of the meanings of "nature" and what was intended by "imitation", followed by an account of the ideal un-erotic nude and the somehow rather less innocent exposures of naked geometry in the architecture of Ledoux. Then we have "Sensibility and the Sublime", where it becomes very difficult to keep neo-classicism away from romanticism. But it can be done; it is plausibly shown, for instance, that behind the English landscape-gardening movement is a nostalgia for the Virgilian Aeneas.

At 1800 or thereabouts, Mr. Honour brings us up short. He takes the view that by then the neo-classical spirit had lapsed into cliché and makes his point with a dreadful Empire clock crested with figures taken out of the "Oath of the Horatii". But, the point once made, one feels a little cheated when Ingres is instantiated, with only one painting in support, as something so remote from the ideals of David as to be inadmissible to neo-classical company. If Ingres is out, what of Schinkel, his nearly exact contemporary, and the once celebrated Thorvaldsen, born ten years earlier? Mr. Honour mentions neither. What, indeed, about a whole host of artists, especially sculptors, flourishing up to the middle of the nineteenth century, for whom any label other than "neo-classical" would be highly inconvenient? The mood, indeed, is different

and Mr. Honour might, perhaps, to argue that, given unlimited space, one could pass from mood to mood, through the Empire revival and the Salon and the Royal Academy, to pale neo-classical ghettos which are out of the art of our own century. There was no need to do this, but Mr. Honour does dispose of it rather suddenly. His book is really a study of the arts in the half of the eighteenth century, a study slightly distorted by the contained within its title. It is, nevertheless, a beautiful piece of work, perceptively, closely knit and a welcome addition to the series, which Mr. Honour is one of the best.

Professor Praz's book, published originally in 1940 as *Goethe and the Classics*, revised and enlarged in 1967, is now published for the first time in English, is something altogether different. Professor Praz belongs to the generation which knew the when neo-classicism was a dying, neglected cul-de-sac. Early in life he discovered and fell in love with it, and his consistency is recorded in his essays, many of which are personal, reflective and anecdotal. The most striking account of the matter is Winckelmann. Thorvaldsen is a lot out of obscurity and put back to sight. Appearances of the Empire style in fiction from Flaubert to Rosamond Lehmann are collected. There is a charming study of Ledoux. Then there are some recent pieces, chapters from an old, little-magazine piece, "The Neo-classical Revival", and then there is travel to regard as dead but which, once well as not, to those of the professor Praz's generation that it always be its true, exquisitely sensitive, meaning.

WEL AND TOPOGRAPHY

Purple guide

ANCE DURRELL: *Spirit of the Desert*, 400pp. Faber and Faber.

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## The reluctant republic

H. D. PURCELL: *C*











